



AUBADE

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AUBADE 1998



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32nd Street, Newport News

The cold gutters of 32nd Street
don't stop at the curb
with the sailors
and the girls at MaryLee's;
they wrap themselves around
cautious lives, broken glass,
and plywood windows,
reaching in to bedrooms and living rooms
where knuckles collide
with brittle resolve, and the screaming
blackens into one long wail: crashing
back and forth, against the walls
exploding the windows
and lunging at night-
where it falls like loud snow
back into the street.

David Lowell



Zach Holtzman

Portrait II

Ink

Couldn't have said it better

we spoke to each other
In thinly veiled/magnetic/poetry
until we got better/acquainted
and just said things
like how you were/vulnerable
to being let down/by just about/anything
I had no idea
that I would be/anything

and he said-
it's not very sturdy,
but I built it myself
(I couldn't have said it better myself)

we should all be
loudly afraid/when we are
is what you said
when you were
vulnerable/to being let down
by everything
and I'm glad/that you did-
otherwise/the horse
you fell off of
would've been
much higher/than it/already was

It was good while it lasted,
but I think that noise was
everything breaking

by Andrew Mefferd

love hymn.

gloria
to the tinkling wet wine
which we drink alone
whilst
your fingers swim my cheek
and to a hush
of mufflecotton
like bread rising
(hush)
and i
hum and you
smileflutter my eyes
(hush)
and to our whispers

by Meg Weireter



Allison Brown

In the Forest of Phalli

Black and White photography

Just a flower poem really

green thought
imagination train
I'm screaming my way out
of my skin
and tears make me choke
in this house
on the phone
in the street
walking quick
ready like tulips drooping
they get ready and in their
redness
look away one second
look back
they're down
I'm down like that
next season comes
we get up again
gather up roots and dirt
and roots and pebbles and
lint and trash
and damn remembrances
looking glass cobalt blue
distortion through a
looking glass

in this preparation for peace
of mind
I've foiled again

by Sarah McCall

Painting Pennsylvania

by Andrew Mefferd

It felt a lot like Pennsylvania as I rolled down the window. I had the idea that the rush of air by my right ear would be comforting, and it would air out the car to boot. I had been in a weird mood all evening since leaving home and driving back to school. The recently passed winter break had been the first time it felt normal, even good, to be at home again. Home places, home people, home things, had gained allure again.

I think maybe it was saying bye to my mom that messed me up for awhile. I used to get annoyed and couldn't leave the house fast enough. Now, "bye" came out like an apology.

The car had always struck me as vaguely cow-size. Driving through the nameless pasture lands made me feel I was riding inside one of those "medical miracle" cows with the portholes in the sides, so you can watch them digest. The only thing lacking in this illusion were the black spots, which could have been applied easily enough to the outside of the car. Not be such a bad idea, but I'd feel like an idiot most of the time in a cow car.

The way the land was flat and black except for small blurry points of light off the side of the road reminded of the drive back from Pennsylvania. Many mornings as a child I was trundled into the back seat of the car with my brother and taken to see the grandparents. They would ask me how soccer, or football, or baseball, or whatever activity it was that I was doing at the time was, and then go back to picking at each other.

The mood of those morning drives up to Pennsylvania asserted themselves less completely over the passengers then the drive back down that evening. In the morning, everyone could read their own thing or look out the window. Night was too dark to read in, and I would be sleepy but unable to not look out at the unfamiliar landscape given endless possibility by the darkness. Lions, tigers, bears, deer. My brother would be asleep and drooling against the window at such a time, providing a kind of soundtrack with his snoring.

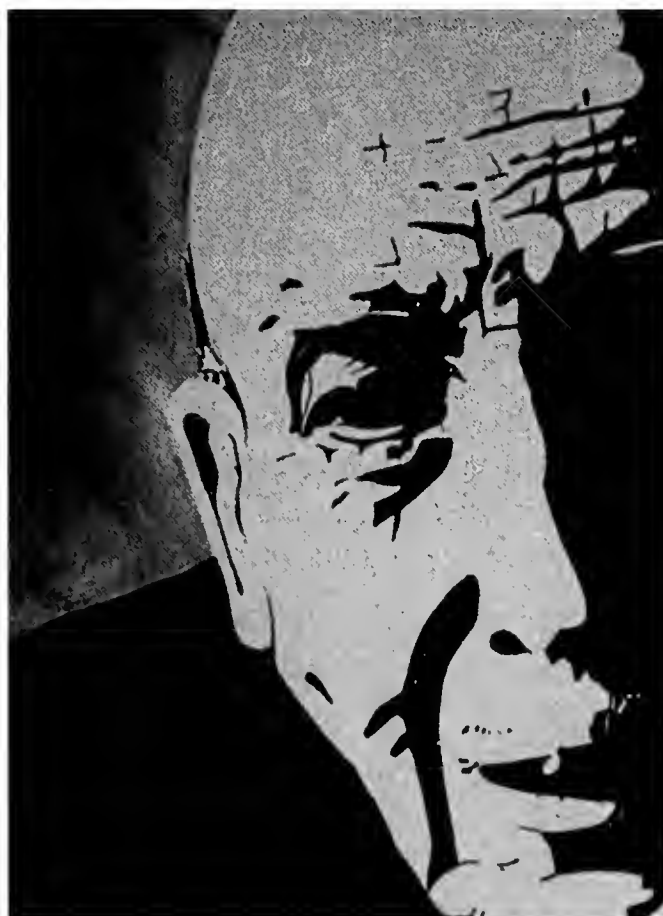
Back in the here and now, everything was becoming two dimensional about twenty feet ahead of the car, giving me the impression that I was being

driven into a painting. I am not sure if we were painting as we were going or being painted in, but it made me feel good to be a work in progress.

I'm not sure how or why, but talking about my weird mood made Frances, who was driving, start talking about her weird moods, fighting and crying with her parents. When she mentioned her parents crying, I could only think about my own parents crying.

"I didn't used to know that parents cried," I told her. One morning when I was a kid I went into the basement and my mom was comforting my dad while he cried. I had never seen this before, and was so surprised that, instead of asking what's wrong, I said I didn't know parents cried. As if somehow, after having had children, the tear ducts shrivel up and the inclination to cry goes to someone else.

My parents told me that even parents get that sad sometimes. My dad's dad had a heart attack. The way I heard "heart attack" sounded like "hard attack" to my adolescent mind; I had no idea what this was, but it was obviously bad.



Zach Holtzman Portrait I Ink and Graphite

I don't recall being very upset at my grandfather's heart attack, but more being surprised at my dad's being upset. My grandfather did not die that day, but things changed anyway. I am glad he didn't- otherwise I would feel obliged to feel bad about that day.

"Have you seen your mom cry?" Frances asked.

"Yes," I said, imagining what landscape existed under the cover of darkness.

"What did your mom cry about?"

"I dunno. Sad stuff. I think I've seen her cry more times. And besides, it's kindof expected for your mom to cry. Not that it's any different- it just didn't stick the same way. It's weird that I saw my dad cry first, though. Or maybe I just remember it that way."

"We've got to turn around- we're running out of gas."

"Oh, shit, you're right." The needle was resting on the pin in the red area. So she made U-turn.

"Don't worry- I can go thousands of miles on this," she said. "I've tested it." I was sure she had.

I rolled the window up and stared out of it, distracted out of my weird mood. Sometimes physical distance can translate into emotional distance. Some big illuminated thing floated on the right. It looked like what I imagine a football stadium would in the middle of a cornfield. "Do you know what that thing is?"

"No, I don't," she said.

"Let's come out here in the daytime sometime."

"Alright," she said, steering us into the night.

After I had woken up and taken a shower the next morning, I walked outside expecting to immediately feel my hair start freezing in the harsh cold of the night before. It was the nicest weather we had had in a long time, and it was nice to be able to look at things without my temperature dropping. There were even balls of gnats dogfighting around my head, and I raised my hand as I went back inside so as not to draw them in with me. ■



Kirsten St. Clair

Extended Family

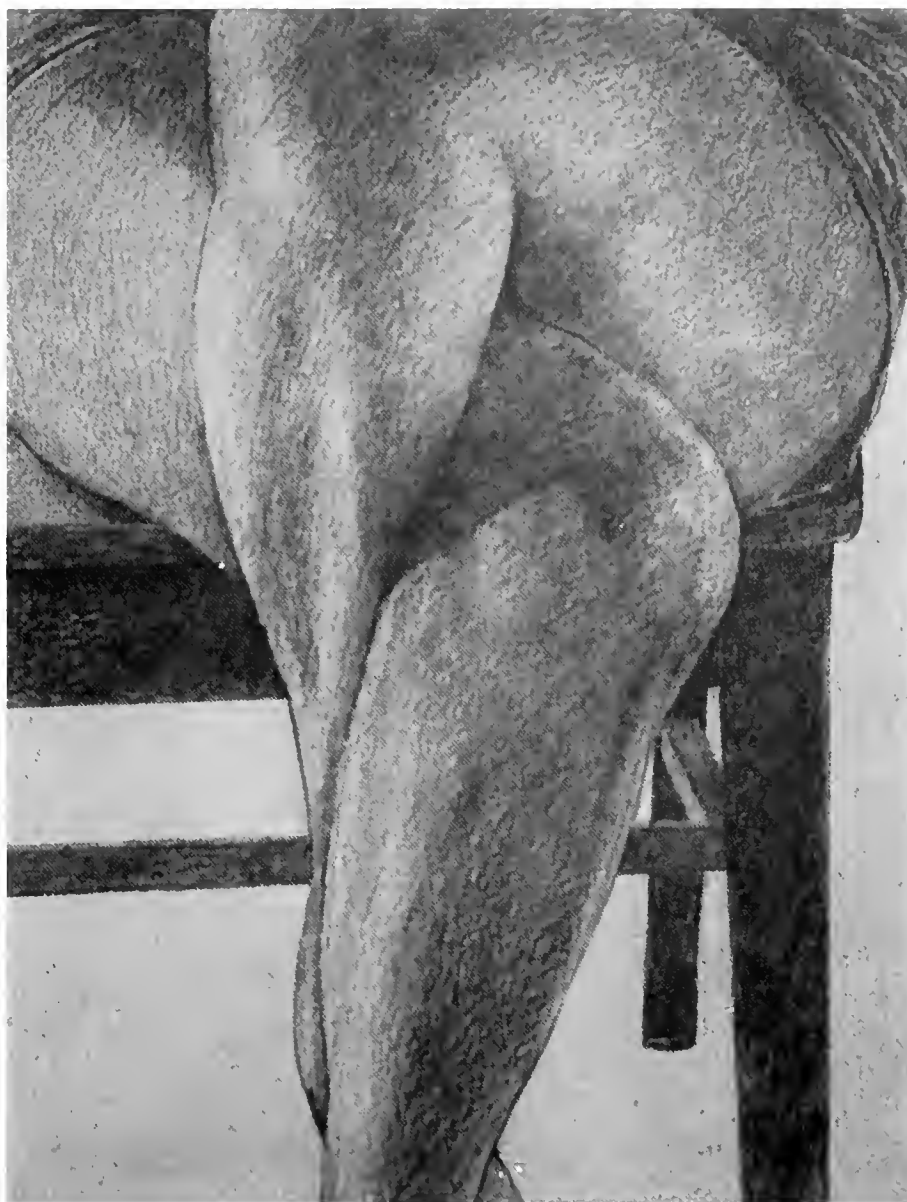
Pencil Drawing

Us

like a hot heavy cloud she was on me
lips rounded in plump stickiness
and we danced close
shared winks across classrooms, shared lipsticks,
shared cigarettes in steamy bus stops as the sky
drooled around us.
papers folded tight and small and nearly square
spoke sex from even college-ruled lines,
and a wet lipstick stain stamped the bottom of each page.
we wrapped ourselves in hot black coats and
went sledding in the dense snow of that winter,
and said "love is fun!" laughing,
me folded into her hot lap, tight like our notes.

sometimes in cold rain i bum a cigarette
but decline the light, to play with it,
feeling its roundness roll up and down my fingers
in sensuous dance,
wondering, "can love be fun?"
she was my door,
the one firemen say is too hot to the touch to be opened,
for there's fire lurking just on the other side.
i opened it anyway
and
the burns left behind
have melted like hot lipstick into my skin.

by Meg Weireter



Kacey Kology

Self Portrait

Pencil Drawing

Mocking Portrait

This is not what I ask for
your assimilated bargains,
The stress of one palm against
a naked back
(or was it against creased silk
I learned to hate this)
This was not what I was looking for-
Intelligence fades faster
than beauty in this light.
You lean back against the bed frame,
a pen to your pursed lips.
Divine details-
Your eyes somewhere between
a polluted ocean
and gray of city snow.
Your mouth-
a pose of cleverness and cruelty,
mocking and full.

This story I've heard before-
You seduced time.
The lines drawn on your face
come from the justifications
in the mirror every morning.

The thing I hate the most
(keep this quiet, I know you will
because when we're alone your
theatrics are turned off then
you're closest to real)
You really are clever-
You are the mess only
brilliance could make.

You select your audiences
with sly precision.
You twist stories into
memory into granite into
falsity and back again.

Alone.
We sit 'in silence,
you are a performer,
again the details-
Your hands make a steeple,
the sheets of unlined paper
wave in the breeze of a fan.
This is not what I asked for-
A stress of palm
against my pleas.
The dusk bargaining with the city
for the blue-gray in your eyes.

by Chandra DasGupta

Best Art, 1998



Caroline Danforth

Calypso

Pastel

Driving Since 7:00 a.m.

Driving since 7:00 a.m. on US 52
(it's noon, hot already on the two lane highway,
the vinyl upholstery's been sweating for hours),
along a scenic route from W. Portsmouth to Cincinnati & further
past oatmeal-graveled roads & black-coffee mornings of lives
stitched into quilted patches of farmland, houses

so close to the road I am driving, houses
that inch closer together when the wind scrapes US 52.
I skim the edges of alternating lives
without fences & half-hearted barns, leaning on highway
hinges connecting where I've been to where I'm going & further.
Time passes more slowly in the sun, counting hours

in shadows—I've driven 2 more hours
to a town I could tattoo around my ankle: houses
in inked slashes, steel beam bridges in ladder stitches—further
past faded signs in convenience-store windows on US 52:
God is Good. BuySellTrade. Let Yourself Be Saved: highway
religion preaches 5-second sermons to pastoral lives.

I could fold my body into these wheat-nestled lives,
bury myself in amaretto fields, & sleep for hours
in grass stretched deep as graves along this highway
that winds through places sprawling & quiet, houses
accordion fashion & clapboard, pleats of yard between. US 52
takes us closer to oil-stained bohemia, further

through flowers wild & time-stalled. Further
down wheat has feathered into stalks, & the ground lives
& breathes still, where rain has seeped into clay beneath US 52.
A shuddering landscape breaks sky & river in streaks of hours
layered in clouds, against sunlight creasing into houses.
Burning maple syrup smolders through leaves falling on the highway,

leavening in fossiled outlines, skeletons on asphalt highway.
I reach into the wind, prick fingers on grassy-needed heat. Further
into afternoon we drive, into moments ticking inside houses,
framed artifacts of cornmeal & dried marigold. These are lives
that feel softer from the outside. I stretch hours
with my fingers, leaning outside to touch what is solid, on US 52.

I have driven for hours, into a photograph of lives
ribboned into thatched-roof houses, steeped along a highway
weaving further, past Cincinnati, leaving polaroid traces along US 52.

by Alison Titus

This in a Hot Spell

Trade ya my change for your crisp cigarette
mark my words I'm bound to quit
watch the children run pounce dive
wet hair whips wild
Later now dogs howl
what makes 'em so sad and lonely
this dead-end street is a treasure
it seems
but I'm not gonna be confined
let the distances seep in and
further us from here
from each other
damn doesn't have to be that way
get rich in choice
stretch yer voice
yell holler scream so they can
hear ya down the street
'cross town
throughout this cosmos
Impossible ya say
well lay yer fat head down
and dream yerself
brightly
Tell me what happens
by and by

by Sarah McCall

Dickinson's Cigarettes

Giving her a couple,
lighting them with her matches
sitting in her attic
her legs propped up on the windowsill.
She said death was Amherst,
death was the attic's stifling air.
We would nod, in silence.
She would speak of her gravestone,
of the flowers in the garden.
Sometimes I would ask her if she
believed in premonitions,
of true chaos, or if she believed
in the ghosts of the courtyard.
Then we would light another.

by Chandra DasGupta



Caroline Danforth

Germany

Pastel

Maps

Turning pages,
seated within a rusty-red cushion
surrounded by the noises of percolating coffee,
and the tac-tac of knitting needles,
examining pages and pages of maps and maps,
bound and titled: Ethel Swartley 1906.

Ethel in a photograph, 10-years-old,
standing awkwardly, self-consciously.
Her border-collie alert,
nose sniffing something—
maybe Ethel's father, whistling up the walk,
forever outside the photographer's lens.

Ethel, author of the pages, artist of
the maps that consume my attention,
seated in the rusty-red cushion.

An amateur cartographer
of America at 1906
of America to a ten-year-old—
borders elongated and compacted
unsure of an exact state size
wary of boundaries
shaded at the corners
faded around the edges.

Ethel in 1906
the background filled
by the symmetry and framework of the farmhouse,
the beams, the foundation of her home,
symmetrical and fitting.
Ethel-focused and clear,
crisp dress, glossy skin.
The yard fades out
blurs out to the right
no picture, no focus—
the edges smudge out, or at least, are uncharted by Ethel.

by Lindsay Stover



Lindsey Flaherty

Grand Prize

Black and White photography

Rarest of Blankets

Think of the last time
you felt pressure.
Pressure so intense
upon the tympanic membrane,
like an ephemeral, cranial exchange
with a bottom-dweller.
So intense
upon the permeable duodenum walls
as if the last three mugs of coffee
were lethal injection.
So intense
that the morning cleanser
lathered a fine, follicular film
of cold, nauseating sweat.

And then think of the payoffs
that these kinds of mental
and ensuing physical
pressures
lead you to.
I have to ask
is it all worth it
and what do you have
to show for it.
And if you say, "Well—
I'm a B student..."
I'd have to say,
(Congratulations—you are
distinctly above average)
"So what?"

For my blue collar brother operates
a twenty-five foot-long back loader
while his grin challenges the width
of the machine's grill.
Finding comfort
in his own adeptness,
he offers me a shoulder,
powered by a resting heart rate
ten beats below mine.
He then absorbs my condensing brow
into his worn, patched flannel,
and sighs contentment,
the rarest of blankets in these parts;
and just that easily
he can give me permission
that I cannot even give myself
to sleep.
And I do.

by Dow Stick



Zach Holtzman

Self Portrait V

Ink & Monoprint

(another)
picked out because of his smile
(accessibility)
dancing a crooked life
while watching
(another)
the blond hair
cropped and fucking
and he thinks of her always
I watch this one's moves
(naked)
the twirl of wind
and sheets clammering
with another

by Chandra DasGupta



Alison Brown

One Kiss

Black and White photography

over geological discussions

discussing textures of rocks and minerals i'm zoning
from watching the prof to watching
her

her sits behind me

up two rows over the left shoulder

third or fourth seat in

her listens to the prof as i should be

head on a bent jeaned knee

pony-tailed back with strands loose,

her hair falls down her back

a button nose

(you know the ones only porcelain dolls have)

and dark sienna eyes

i'm falling in love with looking at her

kissing her mouth and running her pony tail through my fingers

i'm falling in love with the idea

i watch her intensely

watching the prof

my feelings overcoming me, mind, myself....all

but i can still love her

over geological discussions

by Natasha Ward

heat seek

The airport is impossible to find,
even though it's larger than some small towns and countries
It's always the last town
You see someone
for a week
a year
ever
there are many angry people
who know exactly where
they want to be
while you're still
sitting there deciding,
they have horns
(and they aren't afraid to use them)

I know we're late,
but your flight probably is too
so should we hug or kiss or what?

by Andrew Mefferd



Julie Crowder

Intrayoni

Oil

alchemy.

Draped in melted eggshells in the shape
of his oldest buttondown shirt, she
crouches in the kitchen between stacks
of cookbooks & newspapers, on the morning
of a lunar eclipse, considering her options.
She pinches a rubik's cube from yesterday's
paper, working her fingers like scissors,
tearing out pieces of prophecy in rectangles.
She licks the back of her horoscope,
tasting newsprint acrid like sulphur and
pastes it to the wall, covering a few more
inches of plaster.

Making wallpaper out of lead-colored
smudges, she stains the milky half-moons
that edge her thumbnails, turning
what might have been ivory to ink.
Forgetting to wash her hands, she lies
down on the floor, checking her collage
of forecasts for corners that might peel.
Not quite finished,
because there must be more than this,
stretching palms flat to linoleum,

she reads the slick-waxed ridges
with the tips of her fingers as if
her kitchen floor is a oujia board,
tracing the patterned columns of
upside-down half-leaves across the
room, leaving silver Rorschached
figures in ashes and making up stories.
Confusing impulses with magic.

by Alison Titus

Holiday Dinner *at Diner*

Cigarettes and coffee make your breath stink
and your words mean less
I stare absently out of the
window at your sentences passing
out of my head and onto
the street as cars run over them in
pre-traffic haste
putting them out of their misery.
My eyes move towards you
as my nose again receives the traces of your mouth.
I stare into your eyes and see
nothing in them or in those of
the waiter when he asks if *I* want
more coffee.
As I deny and you indulge,
you say to me again:
"Did you get all of that?"
I nod my head and give you a kiss
saying:
"Yes mother, I did. I really must go now
and beat the traffic."
I leave you, the coffee
and the bill.
I take to the streets
quickly in hopes that
I myself may catch up with some of
those words and run them over before
another has the chance.

by Benjamin Bishop

Best Literature, 1998

[in other words, samsara]

not exactly trespassing,
we sweep forward in brown
grass, tiptoeing into july's burning
nights unweaving themselves: our clothes uncling

and taper to the ground,
not mattering. drawn to the pulsing
river, we slip into our second skin too easily
not to fit here, in the overturned sky that lies sweating

onto the earth.
falling open, the river
tongues us. we squeeze into the water
cells, breathing as if we are used to this,

and weightless
enough to float before the first
birth, again: in these moments unclaimed
our bodies break in the transparency of night against

skin, crossectioned
by complicated puzzles of water
and lighter spaces between tree-branched
shadows. down deeper is as warm as inside a vein

must be, and we pause
between movement and hesitation,
breath held for one more priestly sacrifice.
listening, as if we could know what comes next.

by Alison Titus



S.Z. Tucker

Vase #3

Smoke Fired Clay

Classic Navy Heels

after days of shopping, mornings at church,
lunch over bridge games, and weekly cocktail parties,
the shoes are as tired and weary
as the feet that used to fill them,
but now they can rest under the seat.
retired, a myriad of
feathery wrinkles and soft creases

dates the worn midnight blue leather
like the wrinkles on her face:
the fine lines around her mouth,
that made her smile more
than a smile with each new crease
in the softest skin
that grinned for at least a lifetime.

the squared-off toe-box is still bent upward
as if she just took them off—a perfect
preservation of her sprightly steps
to the mailbox and back each morning.
the navy finish has long since rubbed off the backs of both heels
exposing hardened stacked leather
but that happens over time and

it's okay that the gold clasps are rusted
because they're holding on to each other,
clinging together shining faintly.
her one inch heels as wide as tall—
the foundation and stepping stone
of a woman, of a family—
a plaster cast of a life calloused by loss.

that's why her tongue juts out in determination
where her bone thrust like a knuckle
out of her foot
from wearing cheap cramped clearance rack shoes
purchased in another lifetime
before he bought this pair for her
and made her ours.

by Lauren Q. Chadwick

Comet

No stretch marks.

No baby feet.

No womb capable.

I've spent so long dreaming of something else
than the vastness of the sky on which I endlessly gaze.

But now, with telescope and sky charts,

I have discovered you:

streaming, fleeting, newcomer

striking and streaking among cousins of stars.

As I turned to the Mother Universe herself,

you were born, delivered against an enveloping black sky.

I name you, bring you into the minds of others as my own,
my own flaming existence.

by Lindsay Stover



Christina Charba

Baby Ashley

Charcoal

Filler

By Samuel S. Rio

Gabe just fell back asleep. In a half an hour's time it will be too hot to sleep any longer. He had this in mind when he drew the cords toward him in bed, doubling the Venetian blinds into themselves, allowing the sun to lay with him, Catherine, and their daughter. 'Cat' or 'Little Catherine' oscillates her conscious body in the space between her parents. She is not prone to tears; Catherine and Gabe have grown into the explanation that, "Cat gets soooo much love, she doesn't need to cry." 'Cat' turned thirteen months old a Thursday ago.

He pleaded that the ultra-sounded girl-to-be be named after her. Catherine protested the idea to disguise her sudden inclination to be a name-sake. She believes everything is the result of, at least, an ever so slight conflict. "What do you call a child, a girl, that's named after her mother? -We can't call her 'junior': little *boys* are called 'junior'." At these times Gabe would touch them with his two hands on Catherine's abdomen, and say, "Let's call her 'Catherine', maybe 'Cat'...I'll call out, 'Catherine, could you come help me.' And the both of you'll look at each other, shrug, then laugh without me hearing, and say the other one is coming."

By noon, Gabe will be laughing at himself laughing two and a half years ago. The memory of that day will be clear, and he will be impressed by the ease with which these events are exhumed from what has past. By herself, Catherine will be unable to remember. He will recite his memory, and Catherine's face will tighten, opening her mouth and eventually freeing a silent mewl.

They were meeting their friends, Jimmy Watsom and Abby Gamb, for a late lunch/early dinner in Georgetown. Jimmy and Abby hadn't left the area after completing their undergraduate studies, but had voluntarily resituated themselves more than once. They were going to renew their lease in another month. The thrifty idea to eat at this time was discovered by Catherine and Abby in college. The money saved, eating before dinner menus are put on tables, was to ease the high priced burden of drinking at clubs in a city. This maneuver is the near genius of budgeted persons, couples, and groups; still, two drawbacks are incurred. First, a prematurely sloppy evening is risked when the tendency to have alcoholic

beverages with a meal is exercised. Also, a certain amount of down-time between the end of dinner and stepping out to the bars must be negotiated.

The couples shared four Indian dishes, and two carafes of red wine. Discussion was ample, good spirited, and without consequence; they had been anxious to catch up.

When they returned to Abby and Jimmy's apartment, to negotiate down-time, the television was on. Abby would leave it on for Puella, her cat; however, Puella wasn't watching the five o'clock news that approached its six o'clock end. Abby, Catherine and Jimmy walked past the tv. Jimmy went to the bathroom, and Abby led Catherine through the apartment, half-searching for Puella, on the leash of a conversation. They were reunited in the living room to hear a manufacturer's recall broadcast. A baby-rocker was being taken off the market after seven toddlers were reported strangled to death, constricted by the machine's straps.

Moving across the living room to shut an open window, Abby voiced a mark of grievance for the families. Gabe projected a laugh that began in his viscus and created its own momentum in becoming orated. He tried explaining, but laughter hindered the effectiveness of this attempt. Between chuckles he managed, "It's not funny -it is. Sorry. But when you think about it: your child, your baby--you put your 'precious' down, crank up the rocker, go get the mail, look over the advertisement on the back of the missing persons brochure, come back, and your baby...strangled. I mean: how-what the hell would you do if that was you--I'll tell ya, I'd uh, just fuckin' laugh. Not 'ha-ha' laugh, okay(?), but like...you know, just laugh cause ya -ya have to do something."

No one was listening to Gabe. Catherine was talking about how embarrassed she was to have married someone that would laugh aloud at this news. Jimmy expressed his lack of comprehension regarding Gabe in general. And Abby just looked at Puella laying dead two stories below the window she hadn't managed to close.

With this, the evening unwound in the lull of an intermission. Jimmy and Gabe went outside to take care of Puella, but couldn't decide what to do with it, "Does she want to bury it, you think?" They each had a cigarette there, standing over the cat, and Jimmy explained how Puella would have been better off dropping ten stories, "...they have time to relax all their muscles at that height: from two stories

they're all stiff, that's no good - it's like the drunk driver surviving a crash, and the sober family not." Catherine came down and mentioned, "you shouldn't free base dead cate fumes. . . . We can hear you two from up there, you know." Abby wasn't going out that evening. Gabe and Catherine left within the half hour.

Noon is hours away. Gabe sleeps in the partial shade of thin clouds. Catherine is awake, moments from tearing Gabe to consciousness. 'Cat' is still, without breath or life, knotted in the cords of Venetian blinds. ■



Lindsey Flaherty

Untitled

Ink

Kevin Hugh Didn't Know What To Do

Sam Bam
whiskey sour
Cunningham
leans on the bar
with a hard elbow
and a safe scotch.

Sam Bam
won't let the gin run dry
Cunningham
once a chicken leg boy
fisted with hammer-hands
Racing in bare
summer feet.

Ham
Jack Daniels
Sam
can't remember days
his chicken bones
sprinted turn-overs
like old records racing
incluck-cluck chicken
rythms pacing
over sun-stained stones
and uneven pavement.

Ham Bam
At the bar ten years later
Cunningham
wallows in fresh
squeezed whiskey
crisp and healthy
for forgetting.

Sam Bam
gin pumping
Cunningham
smothers faded memories
with Daddy's grey-white hair
Sam wrinkles a mean
daddy-thin frown.

"Chicken legs, chicken legs!"
I call to Sam.
Don't want to lose
Bam in Daddy's
dark thunder hard clouds.

"Sam Bam," I cry
"repeat after me:
Green eggs, I remember
rosy cheeks, chicken legs,
and ham, Sam I am."

With whiskey-flamed cheeks
poor Cunningham speaks
"Damn Sam Dumb Lamb
Daddy Cunningham."

Sam drips like rain
Cunningham
in puddles muddied
with family portraits.

Old Chicken Legs carries
scotch like a hammer
pounding away nicknames
and days.

by Katy Sullivan



Kirsten St.Clair

Aargh!

Pencil drawing

Ducks.

neatly mипpling the surface
of a living green contact lens—
skimming cleanly as the skin
off milk, and i
like the watersounds.
(or lack)— a
pleeple pleeple of dropping wet beads from
leaky brown overhangs as the eye's
light critically
beams through me. and i like
the ducksounds too— when suddenly
wings emerge and slap
at the water in stinging phaughts, and
the yelp cracking the air while the
water cries (tippletipple)
and then pleeples again and quiet.
and i like the singsounds of wheeps and whirps as
they move on the wet escalator and
poke their beaks into rufflefeather
backs— how they
lullay me damply, how
existence is croon.

by Meg Weireter

ceruleans & midnights

driving 64 West
i remember our conversation or questions
i didn't answer last night,
or this morning.
the mountains slope into the sky,
a sunset rising in layers of blues, thinning
before thickening, & deepening
to violet where they overlap.

the sky, steel pressed into a bruise,
webs out & across in ligaments
that collect & darken the afternoon
into the minutes before
a thunder storm, when the air
is heaviest & smells the most
of suffocation.

the rain begins, falling away
in sheets, surges not quite waves
that peel temples from the sky &
leave the ground sacred
& damp & moving.

for each hour that collapses
behind me into another on
the interstate, there's more
i haven't told you.

8 hours until Chicago, i turn the stations
until i find Neil Young, halfway
between needing to remember,
driving west and closer to forgetting,
while ghosts heave silently
in ceruleans & midnights,
somewhere in the mountains,
almost in Ohio.

by Alison Titus



Lindsey Flaherty

Untitled

Ink

hearts speak strangely
tongues look like waving hands
I got poisonous dreams
and envious fingertips
drumming drumming on the chair's
arm
damn clouds
lovely gray day stay!
I love you
(terrible thrice, worse than too nice)
for sake of stale smoke
sick stomachs
ate too much
dreamt wildly:
 the beach the beach was
 tiny and packed with people
 from everywhere that I
 know/knew
 you whispered close to my ear
 "I'm back"
 then the crowd gobbled you up
 again
inside I craved lovin' and respite
from the bland summer
my big dictionary fell in the
water
came up dry
no one payed any mind
there was corruption
everywhere! hear?
critters dying unnaturally
smoke rising oppositely
from tight bunches
loud music sounds
 (or was that peripheral
 dreaming atop dreaming)

by Sarah McCall

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